

## Message Text

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53

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 SCCT-01 A-01 OPR-02

OC-05 CCO-00 SAB-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 /093 W

----- 105600

O R 301412Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9831

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3855

STUTTGART FOR ELG

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION APRIL 30: SPEAKER ASSAAD PLAYS THIRD MAN  
THEME

REF: BEIRUT 3821 (O 291555Z APR 76)

1. THE GROUP OF DEPTUTIES THAT MET YESTERDAY UNDER SPEAKER ASSAAD AND ANNOUNCED ITS PREFERENCE FOR AN UNNAMED COMPROMISE CANDIDATE (REFTEL) IS DUE TO CONFER AGAIN TODAY. REPORTEDLY IT WILL TRY TO COME UP WITH A SPECIFIC CHOICE. YESTERDAY'S MEETING WAS ATTENDED BY 28 DEPUTIES INCLUDING SPEAKER, WHO ALLEGEDLY HAD PROXIES FROM SEVEN OTHERS. SOURCES WHO WERE THERE TELL US THAT JEAN AZIZ, MICHEL AL-KHOURY, AND PIERRE EDDE WERE PROMINENTLY FEATURED AS THE GROUP'S "SHORT LIST" OF CHOICES.

2. OPINIONS VARY CONSIDERABLY ON WHETHER ASSAAD'S MOVE IS TRULY DESIGNED TO MOVE PARLIAMENT TO A THIRD CANDIDATE OR IS MAINLY A TACTICAL MOVE TO DAMPEN EDDE-SARKIS CONFRONTATION, WHICH ONCE SEEMED ON POINT OF EXPLOSION. TURNING PARLIAMENT FROM THE TWO FRONTRUNNERS TO ANY OF THE OTHER CANDIDATES, NONE OF WHOM SHOWS APPRECIABLE SUPPORT, STRIKES MANY OBSERVERS AS NOT CREDIBLE MANEUVER AT THIS LATE DATE. YET ONE VERSION OF SYRIAN "MESSAGE" TO SPEAKER DURING LATTER'S LATEST TRIP TO DAMASCUS IS THAT SYRIA TOLD HIM IT WOULD ACCEPT ANY CANDIDATE BUT RAYMOND EDDE. THUS, SPEAKER MAY FEEL THAT OPTING FOR NEW FACE IS VIABLE WAY OF BRIDGING GAP BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND JUMBLATT. WE SUSPECT THAT SPEAKER IS ESSENTIALLY PLAYING IT BY EAR. HIS MOVE HAS HAD A DAMPENING EFFECT TEMPORARILY, AND THUS HE MAY FEEL HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED A MINIMUM GOAL. JUST BY HOLDING BLOC OF 35 DEPUTIES FROM TWO FRONTRUNNERS (ASSUMING ALLSTICK WITH HIM) HE HAS MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR EITHER TO GET REQUIRED 66 VOTES ON FIRST BALLOT. (THERE ARE 98 DEPUTIES, ONE HAVING DIED.) THE FORCE OF THIS PLOY HAS NOT GONE UNNOTICED.

3. THROWING UP POSSIBILITY OF COMPROMISE CANDIDATE HAS FUELED SPECULATION THAT ELECTION WILL BE POSTPONED. SPEAKER HAS LET IT BE KNOWN HE WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER POSTPONEMENT IF FORMALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO. BUT ARRANGEMENTS ARE GOING AHEAD FOR SESSION TOMORROW, INCLUDING SPECIAL CURFEW AT ELECTION LOCALE STARTING TODAY UNDER CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPERVISION OF GENERAL AHDAB. ARRIVAL OF "PLA" TROOPS ON SOUTHERN OUTSKIRTS OF BEIRUT IS STRONG SIGNAL THAT DAMASCUS WANTS SESSION ON SCHEDULE. THEIR MISSION IS PROBABLY ELECTION SECURITY. DATT BELIEVES THESE ARE REALLY SYRIAN FORCES, NOT PLA, AND NUMBER ABOUT 400 RATHER THAN 1,000 OR MORE MENTIONED IN MEDIA. THERE IS MUCH SENTIMENT FOR GOING AHEAD WITH TOMORROW'S ELECTION ON THEORY THAT DELAY CAN ONLY

STIMULATE CENTRIFUGAL POLITICAL FORCES AS HAS HAPPENED SO OFTEN IN

PAST.

4. JUMBLATT AND CHAMOUN REMAIN THE LOUDEST VOICES FOR POSTPONEMENT. JUMBLATT ISSUED A STATEMENT YESTERDAY REFUSING TO ACCEPT AN ELECTION UNDER "PRESSURE" AND ATTACKING SYRIANS, ESPECIALLY FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM. KATAEB, ON OTHER HAND, IS TRONGLY IN FAVOR OF HOLDING SESSION

TOMORROW. ACCORDING TO SOME ANTI-FRANGIE PAPERS TODAY (QUESTIONABLE SOURCES IN THIS INSTANCE) THE PRESIDENT HAS ADDED HIS BIT TO THE ARGU

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MENT BY ALLEGEDLY LEAKING WORD THAT HE WILL NOT RESIGN IF THE SESSION IS POSTPONED.

5. ONE POSSIBLE OUTCOME OF CONTROVERSY OVER THE ELECTION DATE IS THAT SESSION WILL BE CONVENED TOMORROW, BUT THEN PUT OFF FOR LACK OF QUORUM. THIS WOULD BE VERY LIKELY IF INSECURITY MOUNTS AROUND THE VIL LA

ON "GREEN LINE" WHERE SESSION IS TO BE HELD. (WE HAVE REPORTS OF SOME TROUBLE IN THAT ZONE THIS MORNING, PROMPTING GEN. AHDAB TO INSTITUTE THE SPECIAL CURFEW A FEW HOURS EARLY). POSTPONEMENT ON THIS EXCUSE, WHILE A HUMILIATION IN ONE SENSE, MIGHT BE FACE-SAVING WAY TO PUT OFF ELECTION WITHOUT SEEMING TO ACCEDE TO JUMBLATT'S DEMANDS.

6. EDDE AND SARKIS PURSUED THEIR CAMPAIGNS YESTERDAY. SARKIS'S MEETING WITH JUMBLATT TURNED OUT TO BE A WELL-PUBLICIZED AFFAIR, GETTING WIDE COVERAGE IN TODAY'S NEWSPAPERS. IT LASTED AN HOUR AND A HALF. NO DETAILS OF THE DISCUSSION WERE GIVEN OUT, BUT WE UNDERSTAND FROM A GOOD SOURCE THAT IT WAS REASONABLY CORDIAL. EDDE CONFERRED WITH A NUMBER OF DEPUTIES, NOTABLY ADEL OSSEIRAN WHO HEADS AN AS YET UNCOMMITTED PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. HIS BLOC AND SEVERAL OTHERS, INCLUDING CHAMOUN'S NATIONAL LIBERALS ON THE CHRISTIAN SIDE, ARE EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE THEIR VOTING POSITIONS TODAY.

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7. THE OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER DECLARED YESTERDAY THAT IT HAD STUDIED THE COMPLAINT AGAINST SARKIS'S ELIGIBILITY (RREFTL) AND HAD NOT FOUND IT MERITORIOUS. THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY FINISH THE CHALLENGE, FOR CONCEIVABLY IT COULD COME UP IN THE PLENARY SESSION, BUT IT HAS QUICKLY RECEDED IN IMPORTANCE.

8. NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE HAS OCCURRED IN SECURITY SITUATION DURING PAST 24 HOURS. THE COMMERCIAL CENTER OF BEIRUT REMAINS A HOT SPOT MUCH OF THE TIME. ARTILLERY EXCHANGES OF VARYING DURATION WERE REPORT ED  
ON A FEW FRONTS, NOTABLY AROUND AMYOUN IN NORTH LEBANON AND AT ZAHLE IN BEKAA VALLEY. CONSIDERABLE CONCERN IS EXPRESSED ABOUT TONIGHT AND TOMORROW, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE SCHEDULED PARLIAMENTARY SESSION, BUT

ALSO BECAUSE THE EXTENDED CEASEFIRE WORKED OUT SEVERAL WEEKS AGO WILL  
"OFFICIALLY" END TONIGHT. THIS GIVES THE LEFTISTS ANOTHER EXCUSE  
TO START FIRING IF THEIR DEMAND FOR POSTPONEMENT IS NOT ACCEPTED.  
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## Message Attributes

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